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## NOBODY'S LUGGAGE.

THE scene is a huge dock warehouse on England's great highway to the East and the West, where, coming in from the bustle and the sunshine, and the fresh air of the docks, one is impressed with a strange stillness and gloom. The air is fluffy with very old dust, and the big motes, floating in sunbeams that fall through heavily grated windows, move sluggishly and gravely. The place is hushed and tomb-like. No busy porters nor self-important custom-house officials are here, yet the place is heaped and piled and strewn with luggage—Nobody's luggage—in value many thousands of pounds' worth. Why don't the owners fetch it away? Nobody knows, and nobody cares, and as it belongs to Nobody, Nobody knows best. Much of this unclaimed luggage has been here five years and more; still, nobody asks for it, save in rare instances, and then Nobody often refuses to redeem it by paying the warehouse charges which have accumulated on Nobody's goods. These goods have either been wrongly addressed, or not addressed at all; or improperly advised, or not advised at all; or the consignee is dead or bankrupt, or won't pay the dock dues on them; and here they are in bond and keeping for six years' imprisonment. The dock authorities have power to sell goods unclaimed after two years to reimburse themselves, but it answers their purpose better to let Nobody's luggage 'eat its head off' in charges, as they put it; so that if Nobody should ever turn up after the goods are sold, he may get nothing. With this view, the unclaimed luggage is examined from time to time, and ticketed with the charges incurred for storing to date. Those packages are then selected on which the dock company's lien for dues being considered equal to the value of the goods, their heads may be supposed to be eaten off, and they are offered for sale by auction.

A strange assortment is Nobody's Luggage. One would have expected among so much unclaimed property to have found at least one or two prodigal umbrellas yearning to be restored to the arms of their long-lost and rightful guardians. But no—

not even a stick of one. Where do they all go to—stray umbrellas? They do not enter here—'Nobody' hasn't got them.

What did Nobody intend to do with that five hundredweight of caoutchouc? (the dock-porter calls it 'ka-chook' for short—don't laugh at his ignorance—Knowles and Smart, the auctioneers, call it 'kô-chûk'); and why don't he take it away, and rub out the score?

Nobody sent twenty serons of Syrian tea without address or bill of lading. There it is in the great skin-packages in the warehouse. Nobody's tea has been waiting for him for six years: will the man never come to his tea, or has he gone for good to his bier?

There is indigo in maunds of buffalo-hide, a ton of it, that has been here seven years, and may stop here 'till all is blue' before it will get claimed.

Will Nobody ever come to fetch the ivory tusks, near a dozen of them, in canvas packages, which were sent to his order from the Brazils 'a long time ago?' Or, if he has not remitted payment for them, and is short of funds, why does Nobody not come and claim the *box of gold-dust*, marked and numbered— But, no; this is a dock secret. Aha, Mr Nobody! you prick your ears. Untold riches which nobody knows await you here, and—the best and the worst of it is—Nobody can claim them. However, it will be long before the box of gold-dust 'eats its head off' in charges; so, set your wits to work.

At the time of the dearth in the cotton-supply, when many thoughtful minds turned their attention to seeking a substitute for cotton, a scientific man brought home from the West Indies an immense quantity of queer-looking roots. They are very fibrous, and fray out into strands stronger than flax, and as soft and shining as silk itself. But when he came back, the war was over in America, and the cotton-supply promised better, so he relinquished his project, and left his roots in 'pound' for the dock dues. There they remain to this day.

At the far end of the warehouse is an immense pile of chairs—Nobody's chairs. Hundreds, almost

thousands of them. These are 'deck-chairs,' which the home-passengers by the Peninsular and Oriental steamboats bought for the passage home, and have preferred to be relieved from, rather than pay the sixpence dock dues on something so awkward to carry about as a deck-chair. They are of all shapes and sizes and sorts—American, French, and Indian—bamboo, birch, rattan, wire, and cane. They will accumulate, and no matter how often the storehouse is cleared of them, there is always a pile.

Here are sea-chests too, belonging to seamen—sent to the docks to be left—for seamen who never come. The chests wait in the baggage warehouse till all hope is gone, and when the time for hope has passed without inquiries, they come up here—dead men's chests—chests of orphan, homeless sailor men and boys, with the London and Foreign Bible Society's Bible in them, and no one to inquire even for that—till the Judgment Day.

At the last sale of Nobody's unclaimed luggage, among other stray strange things that were put up for sale was a band-box containing—guess?—a wedding bonnet! There it had staid in the musty old warehouse for nearly seven years. The label had been washed off, and there was no direction, and no clue to sender or destination; so it became Nobody's luggage. Every box is opened by the authorities before going into the unclaimed warehouse, and an inventory carefully taken of its contents. One item in this band-box, however, escaped the scrutiny of the examiner. The bonnet was taken out and displayed by the auctioneer—white silk and white *tulle* and white lilies it had been once. Now, it was all soiled and yellow—a poor sad, drabbed thing, limp and of a fashion long gone by. A labouring man bid two shillings for it, and got it, and was jeered at for buying it. But on taking it home he found sewed up in the bonnet's crown a sovereign, and these words on the bit of paper that wrapped it up: 'A wedding present to my dear Allie.' Nothing else.

And that was Nobody's bonnet. Who was 'Allie'? And had she expected the present, seven years before? Were there tears that it did not come? or would there have been more if it had? And was she married to Nobody after all? And now? Is she Nobody's bride?

## A COUNTY FAMILY.

### CHAPTER IV.—THE LETTER FROM DERBYSHIRE.

WHEN Mrs Blackburn got within doors, she found Ellen with her elbows on the window-sill, staring through the diamond panes, as though a beloved object could be beheld by refraction, even though it had passed the range of the horizon.

'It is a good wind that blows nobody ill,' thought her grandmother: 'Mr John Denton is like to lose his mistress if Anthony gets his own.—Ellen,' said she, laying her hand upon the young girl's head, who started and blushed at her touch, 'there's a letter come for grandfather.'

'Indeed, grandmother: what a pity that John has gone!'

The old woman smiled.

'I mean,' stammered Ellen, blushing again, 'because he could have taken grandfather his letter.'

'That may have been as though a schoolboy should carry the cane with which he is to be

beaten to the master's hands,' observed Mrs Blackburn gravely.

'I do not understand you, grandmother,' said Ellen with wondering eyes.

'No, child; and perhaps there may be no need that you ever should. But listen—if, at least, you can hear anything but that handsome young fellow's last words, which are ringing in your ears like marriage-bells, I know.'

'What is it, grandmother? How strange you look! how your eyes glisten! Are you well?'

'Am I well?' repeated the old woman passionately. 'What a life I must have led these many years, if, when one seed of hope springs up in my withered heart, and makes my face to shine, folks think I have the fever!—Yes, I am well, child, and very well; that is, if *this* be well,' and she placed the letter just received in the girl's hand. 'Do you not recognise the handwriting?'

Ellen shook her head.

'What! do so many letters, then, come to Moor Cottage,' continued Mrs Blackburn excitedly, 'that you cannot tell one from the other? To be sure, I forgot that John Denton writes whenever he cannot come to see your pretty face. But I tell you there may be something in this letter worth fifty of your John Dentons, with his house of eight rooms, and his two hundred pounds a year to boot.'

'Worth fifty John Dentons!' ejaculated the young girl, with the air of one who says 'fifty millions,' and endeavours in vain to picture to herself so fabulous a sum.

'Yes, child,' pursued the old woman; 'and if you were not crazed with love, you would know what I mean at once. This letter is from the family lawyer—the Redcombe lawyer—the same who wrote to us, only a year ago, to say that Richard Blackburn was dead; and this, you see, has a black border and a black seal, as that had.'

'Do you think that poor young gentleman—his son—is dead then also?'

'I hope he is, child.—Poor young gentleman! He was never poor; he never knew what it was to fare hardly, and work for pence, while youth and health were stealing away. Poor, indeed! he that was rolling in ill-gotten wealth, while your grandfather and I were *here*!' and she looked round with scorn at the bare walls of the cottage.

'That was not his fault, grandmother,' pleaded Ellen gently, 'for you know that his first act, when his father died, was to offer to assist us.'

'Yes, to assist us out of our own money; that was a fine thing to do, indeed!' The speaker delivered herself of this last remark with the greater bitterness, because she herself, on the principle of half a loaf being better than no bread, had been for accepting the young gentleman's proffered aid, a suggestion to which old Anthony would not listen. Her grand-daughter, though well aware of this circumstance, was not so imprudent as to recall it to her; she contented herself with quietly saying: 'But how do you know what is in the letter, grandmother?'

'How do I know! Why, for what else can it be, except to say that the lad's dead, that Mr Moffat writes? He promised your grandfather to do so, you know, whenever anything of importance occurred in the family.'

'But why should he not write, then, to tell us that young Mr Richard was engaged to be married, which John himself heard to-day on Slogan!'

'I never thought of that,' said the old woman, falling into rather than sitting down upon a chair. 'Alack, this is worse than all! To be so buoyed up as I was, and now to be sunk deeper than ever!' Her voice, so jubilant, and even fierce, had at once returned to its old hoarse and hopeless tone; the gleam of her eyes was quenched; she looked ten years older than she had done a minute before, as the tears rolled down her furrowed cheeks without a sob.—'But why should the letter be in mourning?' observed she eagerly after a little silence.

'Well, grandmother, Mr Moffat himself may be in mourning, for all we know.'

'Ay, that's true,' remarked the old woman sadly. 'Everybody dies but them as ought to die.'

'Would you please to give me that sixpence?' observed a shrill voice at the cottage door. 'I promised to be back at the stable at four o'clock, 'cause some ladies and children has hired donkeys, and I'm the donkey-boy.'

'It's the lad who brought the letter,' explained Mrs Blackburn. 'I promised him twopence extra, because I thought it was sure to be good news; and now I wish he had never come with it at all.'

'Come, none of that reading first, and then not paying,' began this irrepressible youth; when, suddenly catching sight of the young girl, his countenance fell, and he added in tones that were meant to be respectful: 'I beg your parding, Miss Ellen; I did not know as you were at home.'

'That is no reason why you should be impudent, Jemmy,' observed Ellen. 'My teaching at school does not seem to have done you much good, I fear, since you are so rude.'

'O yes, miss, it did, leastways so long as you was doin' on it. But we ain't got no such teacher now; and besides, now I'm a donkey-boy, I don't go to school at all.'

'Send him away, send him away!' cried Mrs Blackburn querulously. 'I have twopence here, and the other fourpence must be taken out of your father's box yonder, which holds grandfather's 'bacco-money.'

'There is only threepence in the box, grandmother.'

'Alack! nor more there is. I forgot it was the end of the week.—Look here, lad; here is fipence for thee; and instead of the other penny, I will cut some bread and cheese, and give thee a draught of milk.—Dear, dear,' muttered the old woman, 'to part with money and good food, just to hear bad news that has been already told us!'

The boy had been fed and dismissed, and the afternoon was drawing on, but still Mrs Blackburn sat in the rush-bottomed chair, her generally so active arms quite still, and folded before her, and her eyes fixed on the letter, which had been placed on the mantel-shelf. Ellen sat by the window working nimbly with needle and thread, but without venturing to interrupt the silence.

At last, she rose, with a quiet 'Here is grandfather home already;' and she went out on to the moor, as was her custom, to welcome the old man.

He received her, as he always did, with a loving kiss; but she strove in vain to discover, from his looks and manner, whether John Denton had spoken with him or not upon the matter which lay next her heart. Anthony's face was haggard, and his step more slow, she thought, than it was wont to be; but this could be easily accounted for if he had heard the news of Richard Blackburn's

engagement. On the other hand, she knew enough of her grandfather not to expect to find him elated, as his wife had been, by the young overlooker's improved prospects, even though John should have proposed for her.

In the first place, the old man thought his Ellen a prize for any man; and in the second, he still clung with a tenacity that neither years nor disappointment could weaken, to the idea that he should one day enjoy his own again, as the Squire of Blackburn Manor. It would have been ludicrous, were it not so mournful, to contrast with so grand an expectation the toilsome appearance, the mean attire, and even the usual topics of talk of him that held it. Whatever colour his dreams might wear, his waking thoughts were clad in drab, concerned themselves only with the practical realities of life, unless, as by the stranger that day on Slogan, that chord chanced to be struck which always vibrated too powerfully for Anthony's self-command.

Had the pane been mended, was his first question, which Thomas the glazier had promised to step up and see about, in the window of the bedroom; and when he heard that it was not, his brow grew cloudier than before. The winter would come upon them, he foresaw, with that job still undone, and he should have again that rheumatism in his joints, which had crippled him so last spring.

'I trust not, grandfather,' said the young girl affectionately; 'and as for the window, if that remains as it is, and since I am not subject to rheumatism, grandmother and you shall have my room.'

'To which we shall be all the more welcome,' remarked the old man grimly, 'because you hope to be elsewhere—eh, you jade?—where the panes of glass are sound.'

'Indeed, grandfather'—

'There, there; don't tell stories, girl,' interrupted Anthony pettishly. 'I know all about it; Denton has been talking to me for an hour and more. I daresay he thinks it's a mighty generous thing to offer to marry a quarryman's daughter, he being the master of us all; but I can tell him—and indeed I did tell him—that Anthony Blackburn's grand-daughter has as good blood in her veins—from one side, at least—as any girl in England, and may one day yet hold up her head with the highest. Two hundred a year, indeed! Why, unless young Richard has kicked it down—which is not very likely, since he is still a minor—there is four thousand a year in land about the Manor; and the Mosedale property, Mr Moffat tells me, is worth ten times what it was, now that the town has sprung up.'

'There is a letter come for you from Mr Moffat, grandfather,' said Ellen quietly, to whom the opportunity for thus interrupting the old man's recital of his possible greatness was welcome enough.

'I expected there would be,' returned he coldly; 'and my expectations, when at least misfortunes are anticipated, are generally realised. John Denton took care to tell me that young Richard is engaged to be married; but there's many a slip between the cup and the lip, and instead of the marriage-bed, the grave sometimes receives'—

'Nay, grandfather, do not talk like that; I am sure you do not mean it. You are too kind, too good'—

'Do I not, grand-daughter?' And the old man stood still, while over his bearded face there stole a terrible look. 'I tell you, that if by raising my finger—thus—I could save that young man's life!—'

'Yes; but you would not take it! Oh, say you would not take it, grandfather?' pleaded the young girl passionately. 'The seal of the letter is black, and there is black on the border of the envelope, and for all we know, we may be talking of one whom death has already taken.'

'Black on the border!' cried the old man, his eyes lighting with sudden fire, and his limbs moving with hasty strides towards the cottage. 'Where is the letter?—Where is it, wife, I say?'

'It is on the mantel-shelf next to your 'baccobox, Anthony; and we took out your last three pennies, besides two of my own, to pay the lad as brought it, and until Saturday, we have not a farthing in the house. Yet it brings nought but bad news, Ellen tells me!—'

'It brings the best of news,' exclaimed the old man excitedly. 'I say it must bring it.—Get me a chair, Nelly, for I feel my head go round; there is something dancing before my eyes, and I cannot make out a word. Read it aloud, child. But no; I can't bear that: let us know the news at once in a single word.'

'Mr Richard Blackburn is dead,' said Ellen in a solemn voice.

'Then justice is done at last,' ejaculated Anthony, clasping his hands. 'At last, after fifty years!'

'And there is money in the letter—notes!' exclaimed Mrs Blackburn, snatching both them and it from her grand-daughter's hand. 'There is fifty pounds, in case we may have present need of money, he writes, and to defray expenses on our journey home.'

'Home!' repeated the old man. 'Home at last!' Then his lips moved without a sound.

'It was applepox, and quite sudden,' observed Mrs Blackburn, looking up from the letter. 'You know we were once told that he had a short neck. How I wish that we had got this money in golden pounds; it don't look half so much in paper!—does it?'

The sight of such an unaccustomed sum within her very palm, prevented all speculation on the future; the letter itself, with its contents, was disregarded in comparison with such a present gain.

'What a terrible blow for the young girl who was engaged to be married to poor Mr Richard!' exclaimed Ellen sorrowfully, her genuine regret doubtless increased by the position in which she herself stood with respect to the young overlooker.

'My darling Nelly,' said the old man softly, 'let me kiss you! You are a good girl, and Heaven has rewarded you for it: that charming face of yours has now the fortune which always seemed by rights to belong to it. Within six months, you will be the belle of the county. I wish you joy, my dear, with all my heart.'

'Thank you, grandfather,' replied Ellen timidly. 'I hope that you and grandmother will find all the happiness from this change of position which you anticipate;' and with that she glided from the room into her own bedchamber.

'I am afraid she will hanker after that John Denton still,' said the old man slowly; 'and though, of course, he is not to be thought of now, it is lucky I did not give him a definite promise.'

'It is not that, Anthony, which makes Nelly sad,' said Mrs Blackburn earnestly; 'it is the thought that we are such a divided family: you don't know how she frets about that. Surely, now that you have got your own again, you will forgive and forget.'

'I cannot forget, woman,' returned he gloomily; 'the remembrance of which you speak forces itself upon me now with tenfold bitterness. But I will endeavour to forgive.'

An hour ago, one would have said that such news as they had just received must needs have made every member of the little household happy. Yet Anthony Blackburn, unable to dismiss from his mind the recollection which his wife had just evoked, took his way towards the little seaside town with no very radiant looks; and Ellen, filled with sad forebodings, lay on her little bed with her face to the wall, too sad to shed a tear.

Mrs Blackburn alone seemed to feel these sudden rays of the sunshine of prosperity strike to her very core. 'She could sit down to nothing,' as she expressed it, from sheer delirious joy, but moved briskly about the cottage, again and again stopping to smooth out the two bank-notes which her husband had left with her (he had gone to get change for the rest), and to murmur to herself that her Willy was coming home, for good, to be a gentleman.

#### CHAPTER V.—COMING HOME.

It is not many days since that eventful letter arrived, for which Mrs Blackburn had disbursed all the money in the family coffers; yet the cottage on the moor is tenanted; and a carriage-and-four is conveying its three inmates to the home that is so old to two of them, and so new to the third, as fast as the steepness of the Derbyshire hills will permit. The railway has brought them no nearer than within twelve miles of the Manor; and to Mrs Blackburn, eagerly desirous of beholding the great house of which she is at last the mistress, this distance appears interminable. Prosperity, if it has already taught her impatience, has, however, worked wonders for her externally; her attire, by no means sombre in its tints—for Anthony has peremptorily forbidden the least pretence of mourning for his deceased nephew, and she is far from wishing to be disobedient in this respect—becomes her well; the splendour, at which she herself would fain have aimed, has been judiciously mitigated by her grand-daughter's good taste, but enough remains for striking effect. The best remedy for her impatience seems to consist in regarding closely the texture of her costly mantle, or stroking the unaccustomed gloves that conceal her red rough hands. Beside her sits her husband, his eyes restlessly roving from object to object on the road, which, with every revolution of the wheels, seems to grow more and more familiar to him; still, every now and then, his recollection is evidently at fault; and this seems to pain him. He will then stand up and put a question or two to the nearest postboy, albeit he generally receives little satisfaction from that source. The postboy has not a map of the district around Blackburn Manor, fifty years old, before his mind's eye, so as to be able to appreciate minute changes, although he can indicate important ones. Thus, after having reached the top of a long winding hill, from which a vast extent of



country could be seen, 'What's that?' cried Anthony eagerly, pointing to where from some far distant valley rose the smoke of a thousand fires.

'Why, Mosedale, sir,' answered the man, turning round in his saddle with great astonishment, while the panting horses rested for a minute. 'There's twenty thousand folks and more lives down yonder now, sir.'

'Ah, to be sure, I had forgotten,' returned Anthony with the colour in his ancient cheeks. 'But that high mound yonder to the left is surely new!' He pointed to the verge of the far-stretching purple moor, where something resembling earth-works seemed to have been recently thrown up.

'That is the new reservoir, sir, for supplying the town with water. They do say it cost fifty thousand pounds.'

Anthony nodded gravely, and his bearded face grew sad. The last time he had stood upon that moor—gun in hand, and full of strength and youth—not only was there no such mound to be seen, but no cloud of smoke hung over yonder valley. He felt like Rip Van Winkle after his long sleep; and, indeed, his condition was even worse, for not only were his people changed beyond recognition, and mostly by death itself, but the places in which they had dwelt had altered also. He felt somehow ashamed of his ignorance, and put his next question with a faltering voice, and in a form that admitted of retreat: 'That is not Curlew Hall with the tall turret, is it?'

'Yes, indeed, it is, sir; though I daresay the new wing, built by the late Squire, makes it look strange; and yet that must have been done these ten years. They do say he crippled himself with the expense; but young Mr Herbert would have run through the money anyhow, so it's just as well spent in bricks and mortar.'

The carriage moved rapidly on, and the observations of the communicative postboy were thereby cut short; but they awoke a train of reflection in the old man, who lay back as if fatigued, regarding with half-shut eyes the pale features of his beautiful grand-daughter who sat opposite to him.

'That is the young Herbert Stanhope,' ran his thoughts, 'whom I saw on Slogan the other day, and whose grandfather was once my bosom-friend. He has a good heart, I think, even if he be a spendthrift, since he offered an old quarryman a drink from his flask. Perhaps it was for the sake of Nelly's pretty face; but if so, so much the better. The Curlew and Blackburn estates join at the Longacre. His family is the oldest in the county, except our own; and if he is in want of money, there will be less of scruple.'

Some unpleasant thought had here arisen in the old man's brain, for he sighed heavily, and once more raised himself and looked around, as though to avoid dwelling upon it.

'We surely ought to see Redcombe from here, man, ought we not?' inquired he. 'One used to catch the church-tower from all points of the moor, I thought.'

'Ay, sir, but that was before the woods grewed,' bawled the postboy. 'You don't see neither church nor manor now till you comes close upon 'em.'

Even the very face of nature, then, was altered beyond recognition: changes such as the rapid growth of Mosedale—which had much enriched the Blackburn estate, by-the-bye—the old man had

expected to see, but this strangeness of the material features of the landscape was entirely unlooked for. The home picture which he had had before his eyes for so many years in imagination, and which he had thought to see realised that afternoon, did not, then, even exist, but had been swept away with the generation which was familiar with it. Anthony ventured upon no more questions, lest he should learn that any of his usurping kinsfolk might have altered the Manor-house itself. But as the vehicle rapidly descended into the valley, where the village nestled beneath spreading elms, field after field was passed that he knew well, farm after farm, which, though with a new outbuilding here and there, were still very recognisable; the open green with apparently the self-same groups of children on it, and the same flocks of geese that he had seen there when he last beheld it; then the ancient ivy-covered church unchanged by a mere fifty additional years, and from which those bells were pealing blithely for his return, which had been forbidden to hail his marriage-day; and last the Manor-house itself, no stick nor stone of which seemed otherwise than the exile had figured it: perhaps the truth was, though Memory had enriched the picture with her softened lights, Time too, on his part, had invested the reality with his mellow charms.

Blackburn Manor was an Elizabethan mansion, not indeed of imposing size, but still of large proportions; with a broad stone terrace (upon which the peacocks strutted and screamed), approached by broad stone steps, with urns of stone ablaze with scarlet flowers. The whole face of the house seemed veiled from the evening sun by a network of greenery, out of which peeped many a blossom of rose and passion-flower; and upon the terrace balcony, as on the steps, the geraniums shone like lines of festal fire. These last had indeed been planted by order of the late Squire, to please the eye of his betrothed, but they now seemed to flash a welcome on the newcomers. A ring of 'ducking' villagers at the gates, and an obsequious courtesy from the lodge-keeper, was all they had hitherto met with in the way of greeting. The country-folk were puzzled as to the course of conduct they should pursue. Was joy at the reception of old Squire Anthony entirely to erase regret for young Squire Richard's untimely demise? or was a decent middle course to be adopted? In the carriage-sweep, however, and on the terrace steps, there was a considerable concourse of tenantry and others assembled to do their new master honour, who, the king being dead, were prepared to say, 'Long live the king!' Mr Mowbray Moffat, an ancient personage, much bowed in the shoulders, but with keen intelligent eyes, stood at the head of them.

'We are glad to see you back again amongst us, Squire, after so many years,' was his grave salutation; and 'Glad to see you, sir,' was echoed respectfully around.

There was no cordiality in the sound, however; nor indeed was it to be expected. Richard Blackburn, a youth of really noble promise, had been a general favourite; the heart of a landlord of seventy was not likely to be so impressionable as that of one of nineteen, and his dependants naturally enough regretted the change. Moreover, there were scarcely half-a-dozen present who had ever set eyes on Anthony before, and of course not one

who recognised him. Still, they all knew he had been badly treated; had heard from their mothers' lips the story of his dismissal from his ancestral home, and pitied him. It interested even the dullest to behold by his side the woman for whose sake he had sacrificed so much and for so long.

'She is for certain most uncommon lovely,' muttered one young tenant-farmer thoughtfully.

'Tut, man, that's his grand-daughter,' replied his neighbour, laughing under his breath.

'Ay, true,' returned the other slowly, and with that imperviousness to ridicule which seems peculiar to the profession of agriculture: 'I had forgotten it was fifty year ago. But I daresay the old one was a dainty morsel in her time.'

'Hush, man; the Squire is going to give us a speech;' and, indeed, instead of taking advantage of the open chaise door, and the score of outstretched hands that offered themselves to help him down, the old man had got upon the carriage-seat, and was beckoning with his hand for silence.

'Neighbours and friends,' said he in a hoarse voice, 'I thank you for your welcome. You ought to know me well, though you do not. But that is not my fault, nor yours. I thought to stand here, thanking you for drinking my good health, as your young Squire, when I should have come of age, just fifty years ago. That was when Mr Moffat yonder was as young as any man here, and long before most of you were born. I am like a dead man out of mind to almost all of you.' Here the old man paused, overcome with emotion, and a sympathetic murmur arose from his auditors. 'I cannot expect that you should entertain much regard for a man of whom you have probably heard nothing but ill from those who have wronged him. But I was sent forth from this place a wanderer on the face of the earth, like Cain, for no crime, but because I fell in love with my wife. Or, rather, I was like Esau of old, with Ferdinand and Charles and Richard—all Jacobs—for my false brethren. That is not your concern, you would say. But when I thus revisit the home of my fathers, through the good-will of no man, but by the judgment of God, I cannot but feel some bitterness. However, what has been ill for me will be good for you, I hope, inasmuch as I have known, like some of you, what it is to be poor, to work with these arms for bread.' Again a murmur arose from the crowd around, and one man cried out 'Shame!' 'Yes, my man,' continued the squire, turning towards the spot from which the voice proceeded; 'it was indeed shameful in those who were the cause, for they not only drove me to work, in which there is no shame, but to want. That seems strange to you, does it not, that the rightful owner of Blackburn Manor, and his flesh and blood here, should stand in need of daily bread?' The old man pointed to Ellen, whose pale face, made paler by emotion, or perhaps apprehension of what her grandfather, in his passion against his brethren, might say, seemed to bear out the old man's words. 'I swear to you that this tender, delicate girl beside me has been in need of bread.' Every eye was turned towards her as he spoke, and very many were full of tears.

'O grandfather,' pleaded Ellen softly, 'pray, pray say no more.'

'Yes, my friends,' continued he, 'the things which we have suffered in our own persons are easily forgiven; but there are some wrongs—I say

there are some crimes which even God does not pardon; at least, I have seen that he punishes those who commit them from generation to generation. This brings me to what I had in my mind from the first to say to you. I hope to be a good landlord, a good neighbour, a good friend to you all. In return, I would ask one favour of you. Do not speak to me—try to remember not to speak to me—of those persons who have preceded me here. I will never forgive them, but I would fain forget them. I do not wish, if it be possible, ever again to hear their names.'

These words, spoken so calmly, and with such earnest preciseness, seemed to freeze speech and motion in those who heard them; not a voice was raised, not an arm was stretched forth to aid him, as the old man descended from the seat, and quitted the carriage. As if afraid of that stern bearded face and those implacable eyes, the crowd drew back on both sides; and through the living lane thus formed, the Squire slowly climbed the terrace steps, and passed through the open door into his home.

His wife and grand-daughter followed more rapidly, each leaning on an arm of Mr Moffat.

## HISTORY VIA POETRY.

### IN TWO PARTS.—PART II.

WE have unfortunately no picture of the ordinary 'housewife' from Chaucer's fingers: the Dutch manner of painting, as applied to interior details, was not in vogue in his day; but we have a charming virtuous maiden, such as there are now in ten thousand English homes, we trust, notwithstanding the Girl of the Period. And we have also a character into which she could never grow, the Wife of Bath. 'This is the portrait of a vulgar rich *bourgeoise* of the west of England, where they made good cloth. She would allow no one to go up the aisle to the altar to deposit her offering or to kiss the sacred relics before her. Her head-dress, heavy with many folds, according to the fashion of the times (so that the neck was often invisible), might have weighed ten pounds—on Sundays! She has scarlet stockings and well-greased shoes. Her red bold face and her talk together tell us enough of her story to enable us to understand why she had been sent on so many pilgrimages, and was now going on another. She sits well upon her pony, with a pretty veil or wimple, and has a hat as large as a shield. She wears spurs—perhaps she rides across—and has a cloth around her wide hips. She is a free talker, and free laughter, and we scarcely need listen to her prologue and story to guess that she is a shrew.'

The prioress, although she is not so coarse as this lady, is as commonplace. She is full of affection and self-consciousness; 'of her smiling full simple and coy;' she talks French, that is

After the scold of Stratford atte Bowe,  
For Frensch of Parys was to hire unknowe.

'She knows how to behave at table, keeping her fingers dry, and not dropping her meat from her knife—because forks, of course, were unknown. She affected courtly manners; and had the usual false sentiment of over-accomplished women in any age: she would weep if she saw a mouse in a trap, if it were dead or wounded, otherwise it would

serve for a pet, like a bird in a cage. She had her pet dogs with her, which she fed with morsels from the table. If one of them happened to get hit by somebody's walking-stick, she cried. Her wimple covers her head, and hides her hair, but she has a well-marked forehead. Of her dress we are told little, because there was not much to tell of the attire of a religious person; but the lady had taken care to have her cloak well made. She wears a chaplet (called "a pair") of beads round her wrist, and her golden brooch bears a motto of the order in which the religion and the chivalry of the day may be said to have met and kissed each other: "Love conquers all things"—at the best an ambiguous motto for a religious fine lady.

Again we have a pretty portrait of a vixen in that of the wife of Harry Baily the host, 'who, when he beats his servant-lads, brings out the thickest sticks, and urges him to break their bones out of hand—a pretty picture of the rights of a master and mistress in the days of Richard II. If people are not polite to the lady at church—St Mary Overy's, of course, is the church she went to—and if her husband does not resent the slight in a becoming manner, she calls him a milksop, and proposes to exchange her spinning-wheel for his dagger.' And lastly, we have a charming portrait of the old miserly carpenter's wife, aged eighteen. She is 'gentle' and slender. 'Her jacket is bordered or barred with silk. Her apron is white, and broad, being gored about her loins. Her "smok" open at the sides, and hanging by her shoulders like a pinafore, is "embroidered" with black silk, outside and underneath, where it shews. The strings of her white cap are of the same colour. She has a fillet of silk over her forehead, confining in front the peplum she wears over her hair. Her eyebrows are arched, and black. At her girdle hangs a leathern purse, ornamented with brass and silk. Her collar is low, so that her bosom has a chance of being seen, and it is fastened with a brooch as large as the boss of a shield. Her shoes are laced high up on her legs. She is as fresh as a primrose, and as dainty as a sucking-pig!'

Yet this fair young creature combed her hair opposite a metal mirror, or over a tub of clean water; was innocent of tooth-brushes, fed high, and drank beer in huge draughts.

Perhaps it was less easy to think delicately of women under such circumstances than it is now; but they were certainly coarsely treated, coarsely thought of. It was not unusual, we gather, for men to beat their wives in those times, though it was not held to be quite right to do so. The flogging of women in prison (a thing which would now set the whole country in a ferment) was a common thing. There were 'gags' and 'ducking-stools' for women who made themselves especially disagreeable. As for the chivalric idea of the fair sex, supposing it existed at all as a reality, that was for knights and dames only (a restriction which appears to us to have been fatal to its genuineness), not for bourgeois, and much less for common people. Well may our author inquire: 'What effect did the romance spirit have upon the toiling swarms that the Black Death carried off by millions in medieval Europe? . . . All this pageant of bravery and tenderness looks like a thing painted in the air, far over the heads of the multitude.'

In all mediæval, nay, in all old writers, there is a tendency to jest, and somewhat brutally, against women; and Chaucer, notwithstanding his description of the maiden (Virginia), and his story of Griselda, was one of the chief offenders in this respect. But we are not, on that account, to consider that women were less faithful, or even modest in his day than they are at present. There were two reasons, according to Mr Matthew Browne, for this hard measure dealt to the fair sex. One was, 'the exaggerated and exaggerating conceit of men. In the time of Chaucer—a time when such a tale as that of Griselda could be accepted as presenting a type of womanhood not unworthy of imitation, however difficult the imitation might prove—the conceit of men, ranging as it did side by side with preposterous ideas of authority, dignity, and privilege in every direction, must have been, as we can plainly see it was, absolutely enormous. By the conceit of men, I mean their habitual estimate of their attractiveness to women from a low point of view, their superior importance socially, their rights over them, and generally their glory and grandeur in the scale of creation; including such notions as were founded on a false physiology, which, indeed, were, and still are, largely influential among the uncultivated and half-cultivated classes. One of Griselda's reasons for being ready to give up her child to be slain, is that it was *his*, her husband's—a reason founded on a mistaken scientific position.

'But besides all this, I fear I must add another reason, and that I think it was perhaps the strongest of all. That reason is the factitious prominence which certain topics acquire when the church of a country and its dominant religious opinion uphold the importance and dignity of celibacy, and large numbers of celibate men and women are present in society, contrasted by their peculiar position with the rest of the social body. If the pretence of what was called "purity" broke down often, as we know it did—if, in other words, the "celibates" were no celibates at all in a very large number of instances—we can imagine how much worse the case became, what perversion of the popular imagination followed. "If these checks, these rigid schemes of discipline, these awful oaths, do not suffice to bind people; and if these impulses are in themselves sinful, so that not even a sacrament of the church can do more than make them venial sins, and are yet so rife and so deceitful—why, what can we trust to?" This explanation of the slights cast upon women by the writers in old times, appears to us to have great weight; and we cannot resist quoting another eloquent and forcible passage to the same effect. "In the middle ages, the church had taken possession of all the critical periods of life. It had said: "There is nothing sacred but what we make sacred." Everything was, so to speak, excised and made to pay toll, in money or in sentiment, to the church. It seized the human being at birth, and said: "We must christen him, or he will be lost." It took him up again at marriage, and said: "The instinct which underlies the attraction of sex is deadly sin, but we will do what we can for you, and by a sacramental process we will convert this foul, corrupt, and damnable thing into something venial." It pursued the human being to his death-bed, and sent him out of the world with the tolling of a sprinkled bell (necessary for frightening away evil



spirits) and the "sacrament" of extreme unction. From first to last it took possession of humanity; would neither let it come into the world, increase the world, or go out of the world without its authoritative interference—in the sense, not of a willing helper, but of one who had property in a vassal or vellein, and could pronounce him and all his possibilities unclean and damnable, if without ecclesiastical sanction for his very existence and all his functions. Pleasure or delight was the especial hatred of an asceticising church; and, above all, the delight which we habitually roof over in our thoughts with the words "a happy home."

One of the points which has always been much disputed in the comparison of ourselves with our remote ancestors is, whether, upon the whole, with all our civilisation and knowledge, we are *happier* than they—whether England deserves the name of 'Merry' so much as it did of old, or not. Now, Chaucer is the very man to tell us the truth about this; he described what he saw most accurately, and he had a keen sense of enjoyment, so that he would probably see all that could be seen in the way of merry-making. 'We look back through the mist of centuries as well as we can, and taking Jack-in-the-green on the way, permit our eyes to rest upon a heterogeneous picture of gabled houses, splendid shows, glancing colours, and rapid movement, with plenty of music. The midsummer watch is set, and the watchmen, with their cressets, walk the streets. Or the garland is stretched overhead, and the girls are dancing. Or the butts are fixed, and the lads are out in the meadow with their bows and arrows. Or the fool, in motley, shakes his bells and plays his pranks in some gay procession. Or the young Cockneys are up and abroad early in the first of May, to fetch in the sweet-smelling boughs. And somewhere in the air is the sound of the timbrel, shaken, as we guess, by a healthy maiden, and the ringing of bells, and even the horn of the huntsman, for perhaps the chase is up in Epping Forest. Was there then more *gaieté de cœur* in this England, or in a still younger England, than in the England that we all know to-day?

There was certainly more public carousing, more 'set' holidays, and mirth to order; but it will not seem paradoxical to thoughtful readers to remark, that though the growth of personal freedom promotes happiness, it need not promote obtrusive visible merriment in a people. Nor does it. 'That external gaiety, that loud-voiced muscular mirth, that zest in pleasure, as distinguished from business or duty, which we think we notice in the merry England of our ancestors, is, in fact, the gaiety of half-cultivated creatures, who love noise and bluster, just as savages do; but in part it is the gaiety of a common people who were not free. It is the characteristic of the slave to make a noise over his pleasures when the hour of relaxation has struck. In the time of Chaucer, Englishmen had ceased to be slaves, the lowest and meanest of them; but the condition of the common people was of the kind in which the burden is felt, though the chain is away.'

The merriment of men and women in whom a sense of inferior position is nourished by a system of social privilege, is apt to be explosive. In an age when an architect could impress workmen and pay them what he chose—as William of Wykeham

impressed labourers for his works at Windsor Castle—to have a holiday, to be set free from work, was to be set free from much more than work. Uproarious joy, while it lasted, was a sort of defiance of privilege, and yet it was often 'a mendicant joy.' The holiday-maker (to judge him by the ballads of his time) was a beggar also, and asked for largess. Our author has these and other excellent reasons to give why he 'cannot follow those writers who go into raptures over the feudal spirit, as if it had a natural tendency to make life joyful.' To place the ease or wellbeing of the individual in his own power, by making life universally convenient, that is the modern notion. To make the individual happy or jolly by efforts addressed from the outside, in a patronising manner, which ran naturally into splendour and gewgaw, that was the medieval view. We agree with Mr Matthew Browne that the present method is by very far the best. Moreover, as he suggests, even these scenes of festivity did not occur so often as one is inclined to imagine; they were picturesque incidents, and therefore were of course made the most of by the chroniclers of the time, and alluded to as often as possible. Even we, with all our modern advantages, might lead our descendants into great errors about ourselves if they mistook 'prominence' for 'frequency.' 'Look, for example, at the prominence which the topic of mountaineering assumes in newspapers and magazines! If an antiquary of five hundred years hence were to say that mountaineering was a common pastime of the English people, he would not make such a very bad hit for an antiquary, but what nonsense it would be!'

At the same time, it is likely enough that there was more unthinking joy in those days, more of well-founded hope—for how much of light and liberty was to come—than in our own. We are thoughtful, philosophic, regretful; in Chaucer's time, cakes and ale were in greater repute, and gave more pleasure than now. Our poets are no longer 'lightsome,' and, as our author remarks, it is curious to see how Autumn is a prominent symbol, or source of symbols, with them, whereas with Chaucer, and those after him, Spring was the favourite season. This is sufficiently marked to be significant, even after due allowance is made for the fact, that the badness of indoor accommodation, even in the best mansions, sent people earlier out-of-doors to meet the summer than they go now. Moreover, what delights there were of old (except as concerns theatrical display) were of a more striking and picturesque sort than at present. 'Think of my lady in green and gold, with her hair tossed and tangled by the wind in the morning sun, riding her pretty palfrey at a conscious *allegretto*, with the bells of the birds making music, and the excitement when the quarry is well in sight and the hawks go free from my lady's hand. . . . Whether you could buy the best hawk-bells at Milan or at Dordrecht, was a nice question; and whether the bell on the right leg ought to be a semitone or a whole tone above the bell on the left, was another. We may well imagine a bevy of ladies out hawking on a sweet, fresh morning—it was said they hunted with hawks better than men, and I can well believe it—finding plenty to occupy their charming little tongues in discussing such questions.'

Or, again, let us take a town picture, of the



Southwark folks coming in with boughs of May on the first of that month, and of those whom they meet in the streets where we now walk, without much thinking of our predecessors. 'One of these troops of Mayers, largely sprinkled with gawky boys and girls, is sure to find its way into the courtyard of the *Tabard*, and howl and jump till some of the guests throw them a largess. Or imagine a troop of jugglers or mummers, or a group of morris-dancers, with flags and garlands, attended by very energetic minstrelsy. While the dancing, singing, and mumming are going on, a scene full of movement and colour at all events, a maniple crosses the road from St Mary Overy, and a nun, perhaps, comes toddling from the priory at Bermondsey. I think nuns always do toddle, walking as if they had stones in their shoes. Perhaps the beadle comes by, holding by the collar somebody who is going to be put in the stocks; an abbot on a nag; a lady on a palfrey with her wimple down; or a page all in crimson and blue, who being charged with an urgent message, inevitably stops to look at the mummers; and, besides the loss of time, forgets half his business, for which his white-handed mistress, who is just now breakfasting on beef, salt herrings, and beer, will soundly cuff and rate him, later on, swearing at him by Goddess bones or Christes foot. The "long-haired page in crimson clad" makes better haste back than he did in going, and on his way hears the bell of St Mary Overy strike the hour. He is not disposed to linger for so familiar a sound, and perhaps, like Chaucer, he does not care for music; but in the Ladye Chapel he hears chanting. What he would like is a row across the Thames, say to be ferried to the Tower, where he could, perhaps, look at the wild beasts, by favour of some acquaintance of his among the soldiers, whom of course he greatly envies. The river runs bright and clear, between banks which are green enough to keep alive its recollection of the Cotswold Hills; and the gardens of the citizens slope down to the banks. The page is too accustomed to the sight to notice the little boats, laden with piled-up rushes, some of them, perhaps, for the floor of his mistress's boudoir. The Thames eddies and whirls with a great noise around the clumsy piers of the bridge, but he does not notice that either, as we should if we were dropped down upon the London bridge, which had a crypt underneath it. From every point the fields are in sight. He can see windmills turning, kine browsing, almost hear the tinkle of sheep-bells; but all this has no particular charm for him; he prefers a stroll in Paul's Walk to shew off his long hair, his pointed shoes, his new black and red trousers, and the paltock with the gilt edging, which he carries jauntily over his shoulder, something like a hussar jacket. Here comes a black friar, hastening to a deathbed. And here the odd figure that reflects the motley of it all. We all know him in *Twelfth Night*, and in *King Lear*, and at the Circus; but how astonished we should be to meet him in the street, himself part of the motley, or in the hall of a friend's house, before dinner, with a cock's comb, ass's ears, and a bladder full of pease at the end of a stick.'

If there was much motley in the streets, much diverse colour of garment, all was laid aside at night for flesh-colour. It seems certain that in Chaucer's time, even those connected with the

great, such as he himself was, slept with no other covering than the bedclothes. 'As naked in my bed I lay,' says he, more than once, and he is a writer of accuracy. We learn from his evidence that the cottages of the poor were sooty because they had no chimneys to carry off the smoke. Even the carpenter, who was a rich man in his way, lived in a house which had no first floor. At dinner, guests were paired, and ate, every pair, out of the same plate or off the same trencher; and the use of napkins and finger-basins was obvious enough, since there was no such thing as a fork. Even the most fashionable folks in those days were what we should now call very dirty people. Nor must it be forgotten that it was something with those far-back ancestors of ours to be sure of dining at all: not only because the science of the Commissariat was but little understood, and Want might be at one spot, with a glutted market within a few miles, but also because one's personal liberty was always doubtful. 'Any king, queen, lord, or lady might have to eat prisoner's food; a fact that made it worth while to blow trumpets before you ate or drank your fill, and of which a trace remains in the Litany of the Church of England, "That it may please Thee to shew thy pity upon all prisoners and captives." As to the cooking, our author is of opinion that the articles to cook with were much the same as now; but certainly porpoises and peacocks are, in these days, very uncommon; and, on the other hand, we should doubt if a mediæval chef could have possessed any article in which he could have cooked whitebait. Men were more from home than at present, and women had therefore leisure to make a complicated, if not a very perfected science of the art. 'When we look at the astonishing cookery of our ancestors—when we note the intrepid manner in which they put, or told you to put, fifty different ingredients into a dish or a drink—we wonder where they found time to do it all. Turn to an old receipt-book, and observe the easy indifference with which you are told, if you want a tansy-pudding or a basin of gruel, to "take" a score of the most impossible things in the world. *This*, too, is to be gathered when the moon is at the full, and *that* when the dew is on the grass: the witch-broth recipe in *Macbeth* is nothing to it. The ladies must always have been getting up at day-break, or watching for eclipses of the moon, or catching salamanders, or tying up marjoram, saffras, borage, or mint; getting in benzoin, zedoary, gum this and gum the other—or else how did they produce those astounding boluses and electuaries?'

Thus from religion to cookery, our author has contrived to put old Chaucer into the witness-box upon all the social subjects of his day; not in matter-of-fact cross-examining manner, but with infinite assiduity and discernment, and again has set the evidence before us in the most winning and convincing way. No writer, we repeat, since Leigh Hunt has left us, has shewn himself so full of alacrity and grace, of appreciation and judgment, as the author of *Chaucer's England*. In some respects, he is even his superior. There are some reflections scattered through these volumes, not on literature, but on human life itself, which are beyond Hunt's last. For instance, here is a truth which few have had the wits to recognise, and still fewer the courage to write: 'No man can know another man as that other man knows

himself; and I am unalterably of opinion that a human being's estimate of his own character and worth is usually far more truthful than the best estimate that can be made by all the ingenuity of his friends put together.'

### PIT CATASTROPHES AND RESCUES.

ARE we or are we not to derive useful lessons from the terrific accidents in coal-pits, so often narrated in the newspapers, and so harrowing to read? Holding an inquest, and subscribing funds for the relief of bereaved wives and children, are both right enough; but half the work is left undone unless useful facts for future guidance are collected and recorded. Most of these appalling disasters arise either from fire-damp or from choke-damp—fire-damp kindling by the flame of candles and lamps, and burning up everything and everybody; or choke-damp stifling the poor miners with carbonic acid. Here the lessons to be learned are mainly those connected with ventilation and the safety-lamp. In the smaller number of instances, where a flooding with water, or the falling in of the sides of a shaft, has produced the mischief, researches and precautions of other kinds are obviously suggested. But experience has now taught us pretty clearly to learn this additional lesson—not to believe that even a *week's starvation* will necessarily kill the poor fellows who are deep down in the mine.

In the remarkable escape from the Edmonston Colliery, in Scotland, some years ago, the occurrence was neither the explosion of fire-damp nor the flooding of the workings, but the shutting up of one of the passages by a mass of brick and timber; nevertheless, the lesson taught was the same, to encourage hope until hope itself dies. A portion of the side-lining of the colliery shaft fell in, and the débris was sufficient in quantity to fill up from the bottom of the shaft to the level, and above the level, of the workings. Fortunately, there were only a few persons down the pit at the time—thirteen in number. It was before the termination of that disgraceful period when the gentler sex as well as the rougher was employed in mining; four of the persons were women. The attention of the men above ground was at once directed to the ventilating shaft, a few hundred yards distant from the main shaft; it was known that a horizontal air-passage extended from the one shaft to the other; and a fair probability appeared that the buried miners, unable to force a way through the mass of rubbish in the main shaft, would bend their steps towards the other, and there look for succour. Several men consequently descended the ventilating shaft; but the air was too foul to enable them to reach the necessary depth of five or six hundred feet; and after two attempts they desisted. Attention was then directed again to the main shaft, a mode of rescue planned—necessarily slow, but the best that could be thought of. A wooden cylinder or 'crib' was made, the same diameter as the shaft, to fill up a certain space while the rubbish was being removed. While this was in preparation, a messenger arrived in haste to say that feeble voices had been heard down the ventilating shaft. Of course all hands hastened thither, with a renewed hope of being able to effect a rescue. Men descended, battled courageously against the foul air, and shortly

returned bringing up the youngest of the four women. Her first exclamation was: 'Eh, sirs, we have been praying a' nicht.'

Now what had the poor imprisoned thirteen been doing all this while? They soon ascertained the hopelessness of trying to remove the rubbish which blocked up the opening of the horizontal passage into the working shaft; they tried that passage to the other end, but, as it was only three feet high, and nearly filled with water, their progress was speedily barred, and they returned to the workings, which were in a sort of midway position. They knelt down to pray, and ponder on their miserable condition. Forenoon, afternoon, evening, night passed. At six o'clock next morning, they made another attempt to reach the ventilating shaft, and were again frustrated. Then their candles went out, and they sought a dry place where they might lie down to die. They sang a hymn, and prayed, and thus passed the second day. At five o'clock on the following morning, they raised courage to make one more attempt; and this time with good success. They found the water in the horizontal passage two inches less than on the preceding day, though still reaching up very near to the roof. They groped through, with their faces so turned up as to be above the level of the water. Two of the men who had the best knowledge of the way took the lead. All formed a chain, holding on by one another's garments, and the men carrying the women as best they could; one strong man carried the weakest woman on his back, and at the same time dragged along the weakest man. It was perilous work, for unless the mouths could be kept above water, survival would have been impossible. After two hours' laborious and anxious toil, they arrived at the ventilating shaft, where their feeble shouts were fortunately heard by the persons above. All the thirteen were, one by one, brought up, and restored by kind and judicious treatment.

In this case, the plan of operations at the main shaft was not needed; but the result shews that both those above ground and those below were fully justified in continuing their search for a rescue, even when timid hoppers had looked upon death as speedy and certain.

The recent wonderful episode at Brierley Hill affected exactly the same number of persons—thirteen; but the duration of their misery was far greater. About two miles from Stourbridge, at Brierley Hill, are certain collieries belonging to the Earl of Dudley. On 17th March last, in the dusk of early morn, the men above ground at the Nine Locks Pits became aware that there was something wrong below; water from some unknown source was rushing into the shaft; it rose above the level of the working passages, entered them, and flooded the mine. Fortunately, the number of persons below was only small; but to extricate these alive seemed an impossibility. Nothing could be done but to set the powerful pumping-machinery to work. Five successive days did this process continue, until an enormous quantity of water had been pumped up. Early on the morning of the 21st, just about a hundred hours after the flooding, and during a momentary stoppage of the pumping, the men above ground, to their infinite astonishment, heard faint cries from the bottom of the upcast shaft. They all set to work on their new duties eagerly, but seven hours elapsed before they

could reach the workings. They found four men and a boy, faint and exhausted, but still sensible; these they carefully brought up. But where were the other eight? On the same evening they found the dead body of one poor fellow, who had wandered away deliriously about a hundred feet from his companions, undressed, and lain down to die. The other seven, five men and two boys, were known to be in deeper workings. More pumping was necessary. At three o'clock on the morning of the 22d, some of the explorers penetrating the deep workings heard a feeble 'All alive!' in response to their shouts. By wading, swimming, and rafting, in passages nearly filled with water, they reached a spot where four men and two boys were assembled; these they tenderly handled and safely rescued. A few hours later the last man was found, insensible, and terribly emaciated, yet still alive.

But all the above-ground proceedings sink to mere uninteresting details compared with the story which the rescued miners had to tell. We will shape the scattered narratives into diary, for the sake of distinctness.

**Tuesday, 16th March.**—The men and boys went down to take their wonted turn at work during the night; and as the hour of descending was late in the evening, we may at once pass on to the events of the next day.

**Wednesday, 17th.**—Between four and five o'clock in the morning, one of the men rushed to the others and cried: 'For God's sake, make haste and save yourselves; we shall all be drowned!' Water had entered the workings, in immense quantity and from an unknown source. They ran towards the spot where the horizontal gallery opened into the vertical shaft, but could not reach it by a long distance; for the shaft was full of water far above the level of the opening, and a long way into the gallery itself (which inclined a little upward from the shaft towards the workings). The thirteen men and boys appear to have been working in two gangs at some distance apart; and these gangs had different stories to tell, although alike in general character. They groped to the edge of the water, entered it, waded in it, and sought for any possible means of reaching the shaft; but they were driven back in despondency. At length the increasing foulness of the air extinguished all the lighted candles, adding the horrors of utter darkness to their other miseries. The boys were hungry, and the men gave them what remained of the food taken down over-night.

**Thursday, 18th.**—Rousing up after snatches of feverish sleep, in profound darkness, they could hear powerful pumps working, and thereby knew that the people above ground were doing their best to empty the flooded shaft. But the imprisoned miners themselves could render no aid towards their own rescue. They gave up all idea of swimming or wading in the water, or even of drinking it to quench their thirst—so utterly foul, stinking, and loathsome was it. The workings, too, became filled with such contaminated air, that it was wonderful how respiration could be maintained; the men managed it by lying down close to the point where the water reached, and catching the air that came with the ripple caused by the pumping. But what air it was! The men could not see each other even when close together, so total was the darkness. They placed lumps of coal at the edge of the water, as gauge-points to

determine by degrees whether the water advanced or receded; it advanced, and their hearts sank within them.

**Friday, 19th.**—Another day in this living tomb. They contrived to measure the lapse of time by carefully *feeling the hands of a watch* possessed by one of them; and this watch was kept duly wound up, as the only available means. Sometimes the men would venture to grope a little way, to search for a possible breath of purer air, or a draught of water a little less foul than the rest; but they kept mostly together, and near the edge of the water. The boys tried to forget their hunger in sleep, huddled in the arms of the men. Some of the men wrote notes to their wives, taking a last farewell in homely but touching lines, and put them in their pockets or tobacco-boxes; and one of them was particularly anxious that the much-treasured watch should be regularly wound up, as he thought it might afford some clue to shew about what hour they all died.

**Saturday, 20th.**—Each day was now very much like the preceding—no food, no water that they could drink, no light. Yet it is plain that the air must have become less vitiated, otherwise suffocation would infallibly have ensued. Some of the poor fellows chewed small bits of coal; and one of the boys cut out the leather tongue of his boot and eat *that*. The leather-munching *did* bring some kind of moisture into the mouth; but it is hard to understand how coal could have done the like.

**Sunday, 21st.**—One of the men, Benjamin Higgs, began to wander in his mind, and to shew a tendency to start off in the dark and quit his companions. He was the owner of the watch which had hitherto told them how the weary time was passing; and they feared to lose both poor Ben and the watch. The water was sinking, very slowly; but they had hardly strength to follow the receding edge—hardly strength to do aught except lie down. This was the day when the men in the upper workings were able to reach the upcast shaft, and utter the feeble cries which led to the rescue.

**Monday, 22d.**—At last the poor fellows in the lower workings, only just sensible, heard distant voices, and saw lights as if floating on a raft on the water. Their 'All alive!' brought them speedy aid; and when one of the rescued said to one of the rescuers, an old companion, 'Hullo, Yorkshire!' it was no small delight, we may be sure, to 'Yorkshire' and the rest of them.

How the twelve were tended, nursed, and restored, need not be told here. The point we would dwell upon is, the marvellous power of sustaining life exhibited on this occasion. Higgs, the last man, had been in his terrible position from five o'clock on Wednesday morning till two o'clock on Monday afternoon—a hundred and thirty hours. With the exception of the first few hours, during the whole of this long period he was utterly without food, drink, or light, and had only vitiated air to breathe. Nor was it otherwise with the two collected groups, who had been about a hundred hours and a hundred and twenty hours respectively, in their living tomb; they had all passed through a similarly astonishing ordeal of hunger, thirst, darkness, and unwholesome respiration; and their vitality had similarly withstood all these trials. If the people above ground, under the conviction that



all were dead below, had slackened the pumping, the mouths of the side-passages could not have been cleared of water until after Sunday and Monday; and probably by that time life would have been extinct. The miners hovered round the pit's mouth day after day, hopeful to the last, ready to descend to the rescue at a moment's notice, and listening ever and anon for any sounds of voices below. They were right; their listening and their promptness were effectual aids. Where the water came from, was a question for the engineers afterwards to ascertain; at anyrate, there were fifty thousand gallons per hour pumped out for six days. Doubtless there is still much to be ascertained about ventilation and drainage, but we have at least learned *this* lesson—not to be quite certain that six days' abstinence from food, drink, and light will necessarily kill a man.

### SLANDER AND LIBEL.

IAGO tells us that good name in man or woman is the 'very immediate jewel of their souls;' and we have it on the same unquestionable authority that 'he who filches from us our good name robs us of that which not enriches him, and makes us poor indeed.' The English law has endorsed both these statements of the Venetian, and has on the one hand provided a set of safeguards for the security of the 'very immediate jewels,' and on the other a series of punishments against those who in any way contribute to dim their lustre.

Formerly, the law was very careless about the reputation of any but that of the great men of the kingdom. Perhaps people did not backbite in those days—perhaps it was only the great folks' reputation that lay open to attack. From whatever cause, the laws of England did not take cognizance of slander or libel as offences if uttered concerning ordinary people. Such complainants were referred to the ecclesiastical tribunals, which could admonish slanderers, impose penance upon them, and caution them, as they loved freedom from correction, to behave better in future; but redress for injury done by backbiting the law gave none. As between the king and his subjects, whether barons or not, and as between barons and persons of inferior rank, the law was made stringent enough in the matter of slander. It was probably due to the numerous misunderstandings, accompanied by bloodshed, which arose between Henry III. and his people, that the statute of Westminster the First (3 Edward I. c. 34) included in its provisions a law for the punishment of those who reported slanderous news whereby discord might arise. Indeed, the law itself asserts almost as much in its preamble: 'Forasmuch as there have been oftentimes found in the country devisors of tales, whereby discord, or occasion of discord, hath many times arisen between the king and his people, or great men of the realm . . . it is commanded that from henceforth none be so hardy to tell or publish any false news or tales whereby discord, or occasion of discord, or slander, may grow between the king and his people, or the great men of this realm; and he that doth so, shall be taken and kept in prison until he hath brought him into the court which was the first author of the tale.'

This punishment looks very much like perpetual imprisonment, for how a man who was in prison could manage to find a man who was out-

side, and bring him into court, is a question that might have puzzled even the framer of the statute. Practically, however, it probably meant imprisonment during pleasure. The nobles in Richard II.'s time felt the annoyance of slander which came 'betwixt the wind and their nobility,' and procured the statute of *Scandalum Magnatum*, a law which punished with considerable severity those who told 'horrible and false lies' of the great men of the realm. Another law of the same king punished those who defamed any of the great public officers. These laws, however, protected only the reputation of king and barons; and it was left to a later time, and to an unpopular court, to devise a safeguard for the character of ordinary men and women.

The Star Chamber was the place where the law of libel, as it has come down to our times, was moulded; and though in this, as in other particulars, the court came to strain its authority to the oppression of the subject, there cannot be any doubt that it supplied a manifest want in the common law, by prohibiting, under penalties, the clacking of idle tongues, and the wagging of pens by malicious holders. Hudson, a barrister who practised in the court of Star Chamber, tells us that 'in all ages libels have been severely punished in this court;' and that in the eye of the court a man was guilty of libel who 'scoffed at the person of another in rhyme or prose;' if he personated him 'thereby to make him ridiculous;' if he annoyed him by parading his effigy in a contemptuous manner; 'or by writing of some base or defamatory letter, and publishing the same to others, or some scurrily love-letter to himself, whereby it is not likely but he should be provoked to break the peace; or to publish disgraceful or false speeches against any eminent man or public officer.'

As a proof that Hudson did not exceed in writing thus, there remain records of cases where men were convicted and punished for speaking 'certain words against the Lord Cardinal,' for using uncivil words to the sheriff of London, and for saying that Lord Dyer, judge under Queen Elizabeth, was 'a corrupt judge.' In Charles I.'s time, a barrister was brought before the court for having advised a client that a commission issued by James I. was illegal; John Selden was summoned on account of a passage in his *History of Tithes*, wherein he had thrown doubts on the divinity of the right of the clergy to have tithes. Some law students of Lincoln's Inn were charged before the court with having, at a wine-party, drunk 'Confusion to the Archbishop [Laud]!' The informer was their own servant; and the Earl of Dorset, who sat at the board, took advantage of the circumstance to excuse the students, by suggesting that the man, being constantly in and out of the room, had not heard the whole of the toast, which he said was most likely, 'Confusion to the Archbishop's enemies!' The students were dismissed with a reprimand and a caution.

The punishment for libel varied according to the character of it, and according to the temper of the court. Sometimes a fine was imposed, sometimes the defendant's ears were cut off; or he was branded with F. A. (false accuser) on the face, and his nose was slit. John Stubbs, the Puritan, who wrote a pamphlet on the proposed marriage of Queen Elizabeth with the Duke of Anjou, was taken, with his publisher, to Palace Yard,

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Westminster, where their right hands were stricken off by the common hangman; and it is recorded of Stubbs that, as the executioner maimed him, he took off his hat with his remaining hand, and cried: 'Long live Queen Elizabeth!'

A distinction, which has been preserved down to the present day, was early taken between defamatory matter spoken and the same thing written, the law making very justly a liberal allowance for what a man may say suddenly, on the spur of the moment, and upon provocation. There are also many words, both nouns and adjectives, which are strictly applicable to scoundrels and others, and the uttering of which is a great relief to the feelings of a highly wrought man, which the law does not consider in the light of a real injury. It is not our province to state what these words are, but they may be calculated by reference to the standard of what the law does consider to be injurious slander. The standard is this—anything is legally slanderous, and therefore actionable, which may put a man in peril of the law, to accuse him of some crime, as that he has committed murder, or has perjured himself; anything which may exclude him from society, as to report that he has a leprosy or other infectious disease; anything which may injure him in his trade or profession, as to call a tradesman a bankrupt, a physician a quack, a lawyer a knave or a pettifogger, a magistrate partial or corrupt. Mere abuse the law will not notice, as when a man is called a thief or a humbug, but there is no intention on the part of the abuser to impute that he has actually stolen anything, or that he has cheated anybody by fraud. Mere scandalous words, imputing matters which are liable to censure in the ecclesiastical courts, the law will also not notice, so that it is not actionable to call a man a heretic, or to call a woman unchaste, unless the latter happen to be a denizen of the city of London. In that case, an action will lie in the city courts by virtue of the custom of London, which recognised a woman-trader, and protects her accordingly; and as to say of her that she is unchaste would tend to injure her in her business, the remedy is given against the slanderer.

Although, as said above, an action will not lie for merely abusive words, yet if a man or woman can prove that special damage was the consequence of the words spoken, the law will give redress. So that if a woman can shew she has lost a marriage through an imputation of unchastity, or a man can shew that he has been damaged by imputations, say of heresy, which have resulted in some substantial loss to him, redress will be given. For the rest, however, the maxim of law is that 'Hard words break no bones.'

For the advantage of everybody, and in the name of common-sense, the law does not consider as actionable certain communications which are nevertheless of themselves slanderous in their nature. Thus, in giving the character of a servant, a master or mistress may state things, so long as they do so in good faith, and not maliciously, which otherwise would be punishable as slander. It is also a good defence to an action for slander, if the defendant can prove the slander to be true, for it is considered monstrous to allow a veritable knave, a quack, or impostor, to call another man to account for having said, unavoidably, perhaps, and in the interests of truth, that which is indisputable.

A different view is taken of the more deliberate act of writing. People are not supposed to write in a passion, and words which, if spoken, might be excused on the ground of hastiness, assume a malicious complexion when they are quietly written down on paper. When written, they constitute a libel, in the legal sense of the word; and the law provides compensation in damages for injury done to any one by them, and also allows of their being treated as an offence against the state, because they tend directly to a breach of the peace. When proceeded against criminally, and convicted, a libeller may be sentenced to fine and imprisonment. All words which are actionable as slander are actionable also when reduced to a libel; and the law includes, in addition, under the latter head, all contumelious matter that tends to degrade a man in the opinion of his neighbours, or to make him ridiculous. It was held to be libellous to write of Lord Redesdale that he was a 'stout-built special pleader;' to write of Lord Hardwicke that he was 'a sheep-feeder from Cambridge;' and it was held in a famous case to be a libel by writing and publishing 'to possess the people with an ill opinion of the government—that is, the ministry.' In 1777, Horne Tooke was condemned as a libeller for having announced that he was ready to receive subscriptions 'for the relief of widows, orphans, and gray old men of our beloved American brethren, who, true to their character as Englishmen, preferred death to slavery, and on this account were brutally murdered at Lexington and Concord by the king's troops.' In 1790, the proprietor of the *Times* was sentenced to a year's imprisonment for libelling the Prince of Wales, because a statement had appeared in the paper that the prince 'had had differences with his father.'

There are blasphemous and seditious libels which tend to the subversion of public morals, and of the people's loyalty to the government. John Wilkes, the demagogue, or, as the Earl of Chatham called him when protesting against the conduct of the House of Commons with respect to him, 'the blasphemer of his God, and the libeller of his king,' was convicted of this kind of libel on account of his *Essay on Woman*, and his paraphrase on the *Veni Creator*; and it was while he was undergoing imprisonment in pursuance of the sentence that he was elected, under circumstances of great popular excitement, to the vacant seat for Middlesex.

Who is to determine what is a libel and what is not? Of course, when the Star Chamber existed, its members decided the question; and when, the Star Chamber being abolished, the mantle of its jurisdiction in libel fell upon the common-law judges, the judges arrogated to themselves the power to say whether a matter was libellous or not. The judges after the Restoration, and down to quite recent times, were the nominees of the crown, and dependent upon the court favour for a continuance in their posts. No wonder, then, that they were apt to construe adversely to the writer anything which might seem to tell against the power that could unmake them; no wonder that, being in the habit of treating libellers of the government as wicked persons, they got into the way of regarding libellers generally in the same light. Anyhow, the convictions were many, and frequently were founded not so much upon

precedent, as upon what happened to be the fancy of the judge at the time of the trial. A jury was certainly empaneled, but the only questions they had to decide, according to the doctrine enunciated by the judges, were, whether the prisoner or defendant had written or published the libel, and whether the expressions complained of really bore the meaning they were alleged by the indictment to bear. The question whether the matter published was libel or not, was held to be a question for the court.

The confusion which a number of dicta, more or less partial, introduced into the law of libel, and the possibility of punishment which haunted even the most moderate critic on public affairs, or public men, became gradually intolerable. Certain prosecutions which took place in 1784 on account of matter which would pass unnoticed beside the most ordinary newspaper criticisms of to-day, roused a spirit of resistance, which found expression in Mr Fox's Libel Act of 1792. Not without staunch opposition did the measure become law: the government was unwilling to surrender a power which was so eminently destructive of its foes; and the lawyers of the day, excepting Lord Camden and one or two more, were opposed, as lawyers generally are, to innovations on established rules. But Mr Fox persisted, and aided by the spirit which the late prosecutions had aroused, carried the bill. The bill took away from the judges, and gave to the jury, the power to decide what was a libel; and the law now requires the judge at the trial of an action for libel to define to the jury what a libel is in point of law, and then to leave it for the jury to say whether the matter complained of falls within the definition.

The old rule, which allowed of slander being justified by the plaintiff proving the truth of it, was not allowed to apply in cases of libel until the present reign. Lord Mansfield only summarised the principle of the old Star Chamber procedure when he enunciated the maxim: 'The greater the truth the greater the libel.' It was supposed that such a principle prevented careless statements from being made, and that tale-bearing would be prevented. At the same time, it was supposed that the practice of duelling kept men in check, and stopped them from becoming brutal and offensive. Both ideas have been exploded, and an act of her present Majesty allows of people pleading by way of defence in a libel suit that the matter complained of is true. As a check, however, upon carelessness, perhaps also because of inability altogether to quit the old groove, it was provided at the same time that any one justifying the libel must shew that it was for the public benefit that the accusation should be made known. The same act afforded relief to editors and proprietors of newspapers and other periodicals, who under the old system had been held liable absolutely for any libels inserted in their publications. Such persons may now plead that the libel was inserted without malice and without gross negligence, and that as soon as possible after the character of the libel was brought to their knowledge, they inserted an apology in the offending publication. They must also pay a sum of money into court, to be at the disposal of the verdict, as proof of their willingness to recompense the plaintiff for any harm unintentionally done to him. Until a comparatively recent date, the law was such that

it did not screen from an action the *bona fide* reporter of the proceedings in parliament; and it happened that words spoken by members of parliament, and for which they had the protection of parliamentary privilege, were made the ground of actions for slander and libel against the regular reporter and publisher of them. But this state of things could not be allowed to continue; and on damages being recovered against Mr Hansard for libel contained in a member's speech which he had faithfully and honestly reported, the legislature saw fit to protect their reporter so long as he acted *bona fide*, and passed an act to bar all actions against him for libels published in his official capacity. During the last session of parliament, a bill was introduced yet further to diminish the liability of editors and proprietors who have merely reported honestly the matter complained of, whether contained in a speech or otherwise. The remedy of the injured person is thus removed from against the reporter or publisher to against the original false accuser, who, speaking in a place where he might know his words would be reported, must bear the responsibility of his slander being converted into libel.

The object of the law as it now stands is to protect the character of all under the law from injury springing from a malicious tongue. Rogues and rascals of all kinds must lay their account with being called by their right names, without having the assistance of the courts to help them to damages. But the law at the same time will not encourage tattling; nor does it think it desirable that every filthy story, every blot on the fame of mankind, should be described in glowing colours, and trumpeted forth to the world. Hence it is, that before it will admit the plea of justification in answer to the suit of a plaintiff in libel, it requires in addition to proof of the truth of the libel, proof that the publication of it was for the public good.

#### H A R D - U P .

'Come in!' I shouted.

'That's cool!' exclaimed Fred, as he darted into the bedroom, to hide his coatless person; then in strode Tom Brooks, looking very buttoned up and tight about the person, took the chair just vacated, pulled out a pipe from its worn case, helped himself from the jar of bird's-eye tobacco upon the table, lit up, and began to smoke.

'Where's Freddy?' he said, opening his lips for the first time, disallowing the slight parting for the admission of the pipe, for, upon entrance, he had confined himself to a slight nod. 'Where's Freddy?'

'Here he is,' said that individual, who had been listening, and recognising the voice, now made his appearance, coatless and bootless, and advanced sulkily to the fireside.

'Hot, ain't it?' said the new-comer with a shiver, as he glanced at Fred, who growled, banded the bit of fire about a little, and then emptied the battered coal-scuttle, so as to renovate the failing blaze. The next minute, Fred had drawn up another chair, relit his pipe, and begun smoking furiously, as, placing his hands deep in his pockets, and his heels upon the fender, he worked his toes about in his gray stockings in a wonderfully elastic way.

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Then came a pause, during which we all smoked furiously, till Tom Brooks leaned forward, and drawing the large pewter tankard upon the table closer towards him, raised the lid by pressing it with his thumb; took a long breath, and lifted the vessel to his lips; gazed into it for a moment, dropped the lid with a click, and set it down again with a sigh, for the vessel was empty.

Five minutes elapsed with nothing but smoke floating around, when, presuming upon a brotherly intimacy, the result of years of social communion, Tom removed his pipe from his mouth, and said gruffly to Fred: 'Put on your coat, man.'

Fred looked up, scowled, thrust his hands a little further down into his pockets, and his toes into his stockings, so that one nail glittered through the worn web in the firelight, and then smoked on, faster than ever. Then Tom Brooks spoke again: 'Where's Freddy's coat?'

'Uncle's!' I said laconically, for Fred did not move.

Tom winced a little before once more speaking. 'And boots?' he said, gazing earnestly the while at Fred's obtrusive toes.

'These are his boots,' I said grimly, bringing into notice the pair that graced or disgraced my own feet, for each would have contained a foot and a half, solid measure.

'Humph!' said Tom, with a blank look, and once more lifting the lid of the tankard, to make sure that it was perfectly empty. 'I came to borrow half a sov.'

'Oh, did you?' I said. And then we all smoked again, in a sort of blank despair, staring the while at the fire as if *that* were to blame for our common poverty.

'Can't do it for a fellow, I s'pose?' said Tom.

Fred looked up, first at Tom, and then at me, before bursting into a savage, Victoria-Theatre-ruffian laugh; after which, he seemed relieved, and looked again at his toes.

'Got nothing to drink?' said Tom after another essay at the tankard.

I shook my head, and we all went on smoking.

'I'll trouble you for those boots, Joe,' said Fred, at last bestirring himself; and jumping up, he swept aside the tankard, tobacco, and books upon the table, so as to set at liberty the checked cotton table-cover, red, purple, and gray, and ornamented with gummy rings and brown burned holes, which cover he wrapped round his shoulders after the fashion of the blanket of an Indian chief, what time I proceeded to get out of the large boots.

'How am I to go out without boots?' I said.

'Keep 'em on,' growled Fred, resuming his seat, and once more considering his toes.

'What's going to be done?' said Tom at last; but no one answered save by puffs of smoke.

'This won't do, you know,' resumed he, gazing round the room, and then tearing a pipe-light off an old brief, kept for appearance' sake. 'Let's think it out; but I can't think dry. Can't you get the pot filled? Ale, porter, half-and-half, anything—I'm choking.'

Fred rose from his seat, strode softly into the bedroom, and returned with the handleless water-jug, which he placed upon the table.

'What's the good of humbugging?' growled Tom testily. 'Can't you muster enough between you for that?'

I shook my head.

'Then send and get it filled on credit,' said Tom. 'Freddy sent it down two hours ago,' I explained, 'and they sent the thing back with the bill inside. Like to see?'

'No, thank,' said Tom, fidgeting in his chair; for he had helped largely to swell that account, fully one-third of the liability having been incurred on his behalf.

'Well,' said Fred, whose pipe was now out, 'what's going to be done?'

'Ah!' said Tom Brooks, 'what's going to be done?'

'Just so,' I said; 'that's the point;' and then there was another pause.

'No one manage a draw from the old folks?' suggested Tom.

We both shook our heads.

'Any one we could borrow of?' said Tom again, but this only resulted in another head-shaking.

'Money's tight in the city,' said Fred grimly. 'Let's go and sing.'

'Do what?' I said.

'Go and sing,' said Fred, 'after spouting both your coats, to produce uniformity, and spending the result.—"All the way from Temple Bar, and got no work to do."'

'And who do you think would lend anything upon our coats?' said Tom. 'Might get something from the Jews, though.'

'But come, I say, be serious; what are we to do?'

'Anything, anybody, so as to turn up a sovereign,' said Tom. 'Oh, the glorious uncertainty of the law! One man starves, while another ascends the woolstack.'

'Too many in the profession,' growled Fred.

'Three, at all events,' said Tom. 'I'd go out of it, if I could find something a little warmer.'

Fred shivered and poked the fire.

'Why don't you fellows write something for the mags?' said Tom.

'We do,' I said, 'but they won't have 'em. Fred's are all "not suited," and mine are "declined with thanks," which sounds better, and is certainly more grammatical, but only comes to the same thing. There's my last,' I said, taking a soiled manuscript from the chimney-piece. "'Declined with thanks," you see.' And Tom took the sketch and began to turn over the leaves.

'What a horrible hand you do write, Joe,' he said; but I would not hear him.

'How are we to raise the wind?' I said to Fred.

'I'll raise a regular storm soon, if things don't alter,' he said savagely. 'If there was one, I'm sure there were a dozen briefs taken into Bulger's yesterday, and he's got a head like a block. Talk to him and see.'

'Wig-block?' I suggested; but Fred was too intent upon his toes to see the point.

'Why, this thing would sell like fun, if it were printed,' said Tom suddenly. 'Let's get it printed, and sell it.'

'Pooh!' said Fred gruffly.

'Pooh be hanged!' said Tom. "'How I was Garrotted,'" why, the name would sell it furiously. I shall get it done.'

'But how?' I said; for I felt that if Fred's manuscript had been in question, he would have refrained from saying 'Pooh!'

'I can manage that: I know a man who will put it in type in no time. That's about the only thing

I could get credit for. We'll have it done, and then take them round to the shops.'

'Who will?' I said.

'Why, I will!' exclaimed Tom. 'I'm not above doing anything honest for a living,' he continued pompously.

'And what price will you have them sold at?' I said, to humour his notion. 'A shilling?'

'A shilling! and sell one or two!' he exclaimed.

'No, sir: at the immortal penny, and sell millions. Why, this will be a regular golden egg, Joe. You see if it isn't. I'm off.'

In effect he was off; and that night he came rushing in with the wet proof-sheets.

'Now, then!' he exclaimed, dabbing them down upon the table; 'as few alterations as possible, and then we can have them out to-morrow.'

The corrections were made, and Tom departed, after declaring that a plum must result from the speculation; and we saw him no more till the next day at twelve, when he came in, closely followed by the printer's boy, bearing a large bundle of damp copies of the *brochure*.

'Drop o' beer, for bringing 'em, sir?' muttered the boy, hesitating at the door.

'You dog, how dare you!' roared Tom. 'Does Mr Galleys know that you go begging of his?—'

He said no more, for the boy had made a precipitate retreat.

'Cuts me to the heart,' said Tom pathetically.

'It was a heavy packet, and he was very civil, but I had not a sou. Mind, I owe that boy sixpence, Joe. I'll pay him some day. I will, 'pon honour,' he continued, for I was laughing. 'But now, about taking these things out. I've been making inquiry, and I find that we must sell them at ninepence a dozen, and give one in. Now, who's going to take them round to the booksellers?'

'Why, you said that you would,' said Fred.

'Well, I did, certainly,' was the reply; 'but as I've managed the printing, I think you two ought to go with the things to the retailers. Wholesale business, you know; nothing to be ashamed of.'

'Got no coat,' said Fred gruffly, though he was now sporting an old shooting-jacket.

'Got no boots,' I said, shewing my feet, now encased in Fred's bead-worked slippers.

'Cowards both!' said Tom contemptuously. 'I shall be back by five, so order a steak from down in the court—steak and oysters, mind; and then, after looking with great disgust at the parcel for a few minutes, he seized it, and hurried down the stairs; but directly after, he dashed breathlessly into the room. 'More briefs for Bulger's!' he exclaimed, 'and I didn't want to be seen.' Then after waiting ten minutes, he made a fresh start, when we saw no more of him for half an hour, when he came slowly in, and seated himself, looking blankly from one to the other.

'Sold out?' I said.

'Well, no, not exactly,' he replied. 'You see, I went into Thompson's first, in Holborn, that being the first place I cared about stopping at, for fear of being known. I hung about for ten minutes, before I could summon courage enough to go in, for it's awfully hard work when you come to try. There, you need not grin: if you doubt it, go and have a try yourselves. Well, I rushed in at last, with a couple of copies in one hand, and the bundle under my arm, when, hang me! if there wasn't Bulger, buying a cheap copy of *Ivanhoe*, and

he nodded at me. Luckily, I had the presence of mind to stuff the two copies into my pocket, and to say to the man behind the counter: "Will you allow me to leave this here till I can send for it?" The string has come unfastened.'

'And you came away, and left the books there?' I said, interrupting.

'Well, what could I do, under the circumstances?' said Tom. 'Fetch them for me, there's a good fellow. He'll think, from your looks, that you are a man I've paid.'

'Thank you,' I said, trying to light my empty pipe, for we had finished the tobacco.

'Will you go, Fred?' he said, appealing to the man in the shooting-jacket.

'I'd sooner enlist,' said Fred stoically. 'I knew you'd both make fools of yourselves over it.'

'Make what?' said Tom wrathfully. 'Will you oblige me by repeating that expression?'

'I said'—

'Hush!' I exclaimed; 'here's some one coming.'

'Say I'm out,' whispered Fred anxiously. 'It's some one's bill; say I'm gone out of town;' and he darted into the bedroom, and closed the door, while the steps came higher and higher; there was a sharp double tap on the door, and a couple of letters fell into the box inside.

As a matter of course, I was not long in securing the missives, one of which was for me, the other for Fred; the one containing a cheque, and the other, what was nearly as good—namely, the proofs of an article.

'Only to think,' said Tom, 'of that dropping in just in the nick of time;' and he passed his plate for some more gravy. 'Trouble you for another oyster or two, Fred.'

'What shall you do about those tracts, Tom?' said Fred.

'Tracts—tracts?' said Tom thickly. 'Oh, ah, yes—I see; why, we'll get the printer to take it up.' Which he did, and handed over to us, at the end of six months, a balance in our favour of twenty pounds; and though, like many other young beginners who do not practise strict economy, and are not so particular as they should be in making ready-money payments, we have had more than once since to consider how we should 'raise the wind,' we have never yet been quite so 'hard-up.'

#### MID-DAY IN SUMMER.

Lo! lying in the fierce meridian heat,  
The beauteous earth looks like a thing that dreams,  
And, all o'ercome with stupor strangely sweet,  
She wholly in the warm sun's clutches seems.  
Cows seek the shed's cool shade; in sober wise,  
So lazily through the languid noontide air,  
A crow flies from the high green hill that lies  
Aback beyond the flat. The heat, the glare  
Chalks out the white highway that runs along  
The distant upland. Not a bird makes choice  
To warble even the fragment of a song,  
And nature would not own a single voice  
But for the restless brooks that, all alive,  
Murmur like bees content in honeyed hive.

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